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Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/100, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[1] Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 51/69 and 50/203.

2. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, on a rolling basis, information is provided that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate its decision-making. Thus, the reports to the Economic and Social Council focus on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The reports to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming the gender perspective and other follow-up activities. The reports to the General Assembly contain information from all entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, as well as an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

3. The present report is intended to update the information provided in the reports to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, in 1997 (A/52/281) and the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, in 1998 (E/CN.6/1998/2 and Add.1 and 2). It focuses on developments related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in intergovernmental forums reporting to the Council, by the regional commissions and in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997 (E/1997/64).

4. A preliminary framework for action to mainstream a gender perspective into economic policies was contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (A/52/345). The role of operational activities in promoting in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development is discussed in document E/1998/54. A report on the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1997 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system is before the Council at its present session.

II. Commission on the Status of Women

A. Human rights of women

5. At the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the Commission on the Status of Women and assured members that the human rights of women were at the centre of commemorative activities. Campaigns for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the removal of substantive reservations to it were among the activities. She informed the Commission that human rights treaty monitoring bodies were encouraged to give increasing attention to the gender dimension of their work. The High Commissioner reiterated her strong personal commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

6. In order to accelerate the implementation of the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action in the area of the human rights of women, the Commission, in the conclusions adopted at its forty-second session,[2] proposed actions on creating an environment conducive to women's enjoyment of their human rights and awareness-raising; on the legal and regulatory framework; and on policies, mechanisms and machineries. Actions to be taken are addressed to Governments, actors in civil society and the United Nations system.

7. The Commission addressed the issue of the importance of a gender-sensitive understanding of human rights and the need to integrate such understanding into all policies and programmes. It recommended that research be conducted and data disseminated on factors and barriers that affected women's full enjoyment of their human rights.

8. The link between women's full enjoyment of human rights and gender-sensitive national legislation and procedures was clearly established. The Commission highlighted the requirement that both national and international legal remedies should be available to women, and that women should be able to claim their rights through such channels. New emphasis was placed on the creation of mechanisms to ensure that women's enjoyment of their human rights was pursued as part of overall policy-making and programming of Governments, including through gender-sensitive budgeting.

9. The Commission in its conclusions called for gender balance in the composition of human rights treaty bodies, and for expertise on gender issues in all human rights mechanisms. Additionally, the Commission recommended enhanced cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and other functional commissions, as well as United Nations entities. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were requested to continue the preparation of the annual joint work plan. Support was expressed for the planned workshop of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to clarify the understanding of a rights-based approach to women's empowerment and advancement and to gender equality.

B. The girl child

10. The Commission in its conclusions on the girl child focused on the areas of human rights, education and empowerment, health, armed conflict, trafficking and child labour.[3] In order to promote the human rights of the girl child, the Commission emphasized the need for awareness-raising campaigns and urged the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to pay special attention to the rights of the girl child.

11. With regard to health, the Commission called for the eradication of harmful traditional practices. Furthermore, it stressed that adolescent girls and boys needed confidential counselling on reproductive health issues and that health care personnel needed to understand the gender specific needs of girls.

12. In situations of armed conflict, the Commission emphasized the importance of peacekeeping forces and humanitarian workers being made aware of the special needs and interests of girl children.

13. In the area of education and empowerment, the Commission stressed that teachers and school administrators should be gender-aware and that teaching materials could play a crucial role in promoting the self-esteem of girls. Furthermore, the Commission recommended that girls be involved in designing and implementing policies.

14. To combat trafficking in girls, the Commission recommended collecting data and raising public awareness on that issue, enacting laws, strictly persecuting perpetrators and strengthening international cooperation.

15. It was stated that girls who worked should be protected from economic exploitation and sexual harassment in the workplace and that the situation of domestic workers needed special attention.

C. Violence against women

16. In its conclusions on violence against women,[4] the Commission on the Status of Women reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Commission requested States parties to the Convention to take into account in their reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women general recommendation 19, adopted by the Committee at its eleventh session,[5] and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. States parties to international human rights treaties were requested to compile information and report on violence against women, including domestic violence and harmful traditional practices and measures to eliminate such violence, and include such information in their reports under the Convention and other human rights treaties.

17. Governments and the international community were requested to take an integrated holistic approach to violence against women. To that end, the Commission requested that comprehensive, multidisciplinary and coordinated national programmes, plans and strategies with targets, timetables and domestic enforcement procedures and monitoring mechanisms be formulated. Effective partnerships with non-governmental organizations and all relevant agencies were to be promoted and actions to end violence against women were to be integrated into all areas of public and private life, including the media. Specific national, regional and international cooperation to prevent and eliminate trafficking in women and girls was to be developed.

18. Specific recommendations were directed at Governments, non-governmental organizations and the public and private sectors in relation to resources to combat violence against women, including the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women and the Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Inclusion of adequate resources for the elimination of violence against women in national budgets was also advocated.

19. Governments were urged to cooperate at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels. The

Commission highlighted the importance of international information exchange on trafficking in women and girls through the establishment of a data collection centre within Interpol and through regional and national law enforcement and police offices.

20. The Commission recommended that Governments introduce an integrated gender-sensitive legal framework, establish adequate infrastructure for the survivors of violence and implement the Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/86. Specific forms of violence, including domestic violence, rape, trafficking, harmful customary or traditional practices, and sexual harassment in the workplace, should be addressed by domestic legal systems, including through the response of the criminal justice system.

21. The Commission stressed the importance of research on causes and the extent of violence against women, the economic and social consequences of violence and the impact of laws on the incidence of violence. Evaluations of measures and policies were advocated and the sharing of research results, particularly regarding best practices, was encouraged. The United Nations was requested to share good practices and lessons learned.

22. Measures aimed at changing attitudes were addressed, including through educational programmes on human rights, conflict resolution and gender equality, peer mediation and conflict resolution. School-based education and public-awareness campaigns that aimed at changing attitudes were encouraged. The role of the media, including the Internet, was recognized and specific proposals made in that regard. Policies and programmes to encourage behavioural change in perpetrators of violence against women were encouraged, as was monitoring the effectiveness of such policies and programmes. Men's initiatives to combat violence against women were also to be supported.

23. In its conclusions, the Commission recognized that women victims of violence were diverse and included women and girls with disabilities, women migrants and refugee women and girls. Specific proposals were made to meet the needs of particular victims.

D. Women and armed conflict

24. The conclusions on women and armed conflict,[6] which were addressed to Governments, international and regional intergovernmental institutions, including the United Nations, international organizations, the international community and civil society, proposed actions to ensure gender-sensitive justice; take account of the specific needs of women affected by armed conflict; increase the participation of women in peacekeeping, peace-building and related areas; prevent conflict and promote a culture of peace; and lead to disarmament.

25. Governments were directed to provide accessible and gender-sensitive avenues of redress for victims of armed conflict through gender-sensitive legal drafting, as well as interpretation of existing international and domestic legal provisions which apply in situations of armed conflict, including in the context of the International Criminal Court. Rape, systematic rape and sexual slavery in armed conflict should be reaffirmed as constituting war crimes, and existing legal standards and definitions should be modified to reflect that understanding. Information on the jurisdiction and procedures for accessing available avenues of redress were to be widely and publicly disseminated in local languages. Gender balance and gender expertise should be promoted in all relevant international bodies. The principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as national legislation should be adhered to so as to protect children, particularly girl children, from exploitation. All perpetrators of sexual violence, including United Nations, international and humanitarian personnel should be prosecuted.

26. Governments and international organizations were requested to collect and provide information on violations of the human rights of women under foreign occupation. The impact of armed conflict on women's health should be addressed, including with regard to women with disabilities and in relation to trauma stemming from violations of human rights. The specific needs of women refugees and displaced women should also be addressed, in particular through the proper design and location of camps. Refugee victims of sexual violence and their families should be provided with adequate medical and psycho-social care. A gender perspective should be mainstreamed into domestic immigration and asylum policies and practices and into humanitarian responses to armed conflict.

27. Women's participation in decision-making and conflict prevention was to be increased, including through measures of affirmative action and other innovative strategies. A gender perspective should be mainstreamed into peace promotion and humanitarian and peace-building policies. Mechanisms to encourage women candidates for judicial, prosecutorial and other positions at the international level were to be created and participants in humanitarian missions

and peacekeeping operations were to be provided with gender-sensitive training.

28. Measures to prevent conflict and promote a culture of peace through education and training strategies for various sectors, including young people, teachers, peacekeepers were to be encouraged. In that context, the expertise of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should be drawn on. The United Nations should acknowledge and support the vital work of non-governmental organizations and organize programmes for community leaders and women on the important role women should play in developing a culture of peace.

29. Governments were called upon to take note of the conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Governments should join international efforts to elaborate international policies to control small arms in order to alleviate the suffering of women and children. Specific actions with respect to anti-personnel landmines, including the provision of landmine awareness campaigns and classes, assistance for landmine clearance, technology sharing and rehabilitation and social integration programmes for women victims of landmines, should be a priority for Governments.

E. Other decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women

30. The Commission recommended a draft resolution by which the high-level plenary review of the implementation of the Platform for Action would be held as a special session of the General Assembly for five days, from 5 to 9 June 2000; the Commission would serve as the Preparatory Committee for the special session.[7] Action on the draft resolution was taken by the Economic and Social Council at its 5th meeting, on 7 May 1998 (Council resolution 1998/2). The General Assembly is to take action on that resolution at its fifty-second session.

31. The Commission recommended three other draft resolutions for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[8] In draft resolution I on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Council would strongly urge all of the Afghan factions to end discriminatory policies and to recognize, protect and promote the equal rights and dignity of women and men. In draft resolution II on Palestinian women, the Council would stress its support for the Middle East peace process and the need for full implementation of the agreements already reached between parties. In draft resolution III on the mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, the Council would recommend that gender equality and women's empowerment goals be integrated into the continuing United Nations reform process.

32. The Commission also adopted a number of resolutions.[9] In resolution 42/1 on human rights and land rights discrimination, the Commission urged States to design and revise laws to ensure that women were accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property.

33. In resolution 42/2 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned, the Commission condemned violent acts in contravention of international humanitarian law. It also urged all parties to armed conflicts to protect those women and children and provide unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance for them, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the implementation of the resolution.

34. Proposals made in the conclusions on violence against women are amplified in Commission resolution 42/3 on violence against women migrant workers. In that resolution, the Commission invited Governments to include information on the problems of women migrant workers in their national action plans and in their periodic reports to relevant human rights treaty bodies. Governments were requested to generate data and to carry out research on the topic. The Commission also urged Governments to take legal measures against perpetrators of violence against women migrant workers and against intermediaries who encouraged the exploitation of women migrant workers. Furthermore, organizations of the United Nations system were requested to ensure adequate briefing of prospective women migrant workers on possible problems and support services in the receiving countries.

35. In its resolution 42/4 on older women and support systems: gender and caregiving, the Commission took note of the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1998/4) and invited Member States to consider implementing the recommendations contained in the annex to the resolution.

36. In resolution 42/5 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Commission called on the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations system as a whole, to ensure that the human rights of women formed an integral part of all activities in the

commemoration of the Declaration, and were especially addressed through targeted activities.

37. The Commission's Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continued its work during the Commission's forty-second session. In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1997/227, authorizing the working group to meet in parallel with the Commission at its forty-second and forty-third sessions, this work will continue in 1999.

38. The Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women continues to meet regularly for informal consultations on the programme of work between the sessions of the Commission. Working methods and modes of election of the bureaux of functional commissions are currently being re-examined with a view to obtaining greater efficiency.

III. Results of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

39. Gender mainstreaming and follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women was given attention in the deliberations of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, in line with the Council's agreed conclusion 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming.[10] Commissions either paid attention to the long-term programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular to the review and appraisal in the year 2000, tried to integrate a gender perspective into their programme of work or received a mandate to do so. Moreover, in order to further promote gender mainstreaming in the functional commissions, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

A. Commission for Social Development

40. The Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-sixth session (10-20 February 1998), promoted a concept of development that placed people at the centre of development. In its agreed conclusions,[11] the Commission recommended various measures to ensure that both genders were integrated into the process of social development. For example, the Commission recommended that women be involved at all levels of decision-making, that the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities be facilitated and that the value of unpaid caregiving labour be recognized. Furthermore, the Commission urged that violence against women be combated and emphasized the importance of integrating a gender perspective in all strategies targeting the abuse of drugs. In its decision 36/101 on options for the future review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Commission stressed the need to introduce a gender perspective into the review and appraisal process of the Plan of Action.[12]

B. Commission on Population and Development

41. The theme of the thirty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development (23-27 February 1998) was "Health and mortality, with special emphasis on the linkages between health and development, and on gender and age". The draft outline of the review and appraisal of the progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development states that a gender perspective will be visibly mainstreamed in each chapter. Furthermore, the Commission decided that the theme of its thirty-third session in the year 2000 would be "Gender, population and development"[13] so that its deliberations could provide input into the review and appraisal for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

42. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs held its forty-first session at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 11-21 March 1998. In its capacity as preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly on illicit drugs, in June 1998, the Commission approved a draft political declaration to be considered at the special session. The draft declaration set out a global strategy to reduce both supply and demand of illicit drugs. The Commission in its draft declaration did not elaborate on the gender implications of drug abuse but stated that women and men should benefit equally from strategies directed against the world drug problem, through their involvement in all stages of programmes and policy-making. The General Assembly, in resolution 52/92, had stressed the importance of taking into account a gender perspective in preparing the outcomes of the special session.

D. Commission on Human Rights

43. At its fifty-fourth session (16 March-24 April 1998), the Commission on Human Rights adopted a number of resolutions specific to women's enjoyment of human rights. The rights and situation of the girl child were addressed. Gender issues were also addressed in resolutions concerning the work of human rights treaty bodies, of thematic and country-specific rapporteurs, and of other human rights mechanisms. For the first time, the Commission held a special debate on gender issues and human rights with the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women.

44. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Commission, focusing on areas of cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights under the joint work plan. She introduced the report of the Secretary-General on women's real enjoyment of their economic and social rights (E/CN.4/1998/22-E/CN.6/1998/11), prepared jointly by the Division and the Office, which was also submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session. The close cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, including the preparation of joint reports, could serve as a model for cooperation among other functional commissions.

1. Women's enjoyment of human rights

45. In resolution 1998/51 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, the Commission called on all relevant actors to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming by taking the steps outlined therein. It called for further strengthening of cooperation and coordination so as to promote women's human rights more effectively. The Commission requested that the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reflect all aspects of the work under way, and identify existing obstacles/impediments and areas for further collaboration. Its submission to the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999 was requested. In resolution 1998/57, the Commission welcomed efforts at integrating a gender perspective into the technical cooperation programme.

46. As regards the elimination of violence against women (resolution 1998/52), the Commission commended the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, including her active participation in the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. A series of measures for the prevention and elimination of violence against women were put forward.

47. In resolution 1998/17 on violence against women migrant workers, the Commission reiterated several elements contained in resolution 42/3 of the Commission on the Status of Women.[14] The submission of a comprehensive follow-up report on the issue was requested for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights. The General Assembly, in resolution 52/97, had requested a similar report for its fifty-fourth session.

48. In resolution 1998/30 on traffic in women and girls, the Commission encouraged various bodies and organizations of the United Nations system to contribute to the preparation of guidelines for the use of Governments in the elaboration of training manuals, and to provide support for preventive measures against trafficking.

2. Gender issues in the work of human rights treaty bodies, thematic rapporteurs and other mechanisms

49. The Commission noted that some human rights violations were specific to or were primarily directed against women, and that the identification and reporting of those violations demanded specific awareness and sensitivity. In this regard, it requested the thematic special rapporteurs, representatives, experts and working groups to include regularly in their reports gender-disaggregated data and to address the characteristics and practice of human rights violations under their mandates that were specifically or primarily directed against women, or to which women were particularly vulnerable, in order to ensure the effective protection of their human rights (resolution 1998/74). In resolution 1998/51, specific steps were outlined that would facilitate implementation of the gender approach.

50. The Commission welcomed the continuing emphasis given by the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies to the enjoyment by women of their human rights. It welcomed the study to be prepared, at their request, by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat on steps taken by treaty bodies to incorporate a gender perspective in their work, and to make practical suggestions about what each treaty body could do to further incorporate a gender perspective (resolution 1998/27). In resolution 1998/9, the need to take into account

a gender perspective in the implementation of the International Covenants on Human Rights was stressed.

51. In several thematic resolutions, the Commission stressed that a gender perspective needed to be taken into account by special rapporteurs in information collection and in their recommendations. Continuing cooperation between the Special Rapporteur on violence against women with other special rapporteurs (including the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression) and with human rights mechanisms was called for.

52. Governments were urged to take action to combat practices which violated the human rights of women and discriminated against them in the framework of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur was urged to apply a gender perspective, *inter alia*, through the identification of gender-specific abuses and in the reporting process (resolution 1998/18).

53. The Special Rapporteur on torture was invited to continue examining questions concerning torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment directed against women and conditions conducive to such torture. He was invited to make appropriate recommendations concerning the prevention and redress of gender-specific forms of torture, including rape (resolution 1998/38).

54. With regard to freedom of opinion and expression (resolution 1998/42), the Commission expressed its concern at the gap that existed for women between these rights and their effective enjoyment. The Special Rapporteur on this question was asked to continue to pay particular attention to the situation of women and the relationship between the effective promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression and incidents of discrimination based on sex. He was invited to consider how obstacles for women in their right to seek, receive and impart information impeded their ability to make informed choices in areas of particular importance to them, as well as in areas related to the general decision-making processes in the societies in which they lived.

55. The representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons was commended for the specific attention paid by him to the special assistance, protection and development needs of internally displaced women and children, and he was encouraged to continue to draw attention to these needs (resolution 1998/50). In resolution 1998/68, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions was requested to continue to apply a gender perspective in his work.

3. Attention to gender in issue-specific resolutions

56. On several issues the Commission stressed the importance of taking a gender perspective into account systematically. For example, explicit reference to the full implementation of the human rights of women was included in the resolution expressing commitment to the fulfilment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (resolution 1998/56), and particular attention to the human rights of women and the girl child was called for in conjunction with the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (resolution 1998/78). Attention to gender was also requested in conjunction with the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (resolution 1998/26).

57. Training in the human rights of women for all United Nations personnel and officials was to be part of the Decade for Human Rights Education (resolution 1998/45). Attention was also drawn to the particular needs of women with disabilities in the guarantee of their human dignity and integrity (resolution 1998/31). The need for forensic examinations to be conducted in a gender-sensitive manner was emphasized, including documenting instances where women might have been exposed to rape and sexual violence (resolution 1998/36). Gender-sensitivity, in particular in the training of judicial and law enforcement personnel, was called for in resolution 1998/39 on human rights in the administration of justice. It was recognized that in conjunction with mass exoduses, women and children, in addition to the problems they shared in common with all refugees, were in such circumstances vulnerable to gender-based discrimination and gender-specific violations of human rights (resolution 1998/49).

58. When combating impunity for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, States were urged also to focus attention on impunity for violations perpetrated against women (resolution 1998/53). The wider participation of women was seen as part of an integral approach to the promotion of a culture of peace (resolution 1998/54), and the promotion and protection of the human rights of women was highlighted as an element in the creation and strengthening of independent national human rights institutions (resolution 1998/55).

59. In resolution 1998/25 on human rights and extreme poverty, the Commission noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's report on women's real enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the

elimination of poverty, economic development and economic resources (E/CN.4/1998/22-E/CN.6/1998/11). In appointing an independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, the Commission requested the expert to take into account in particular the obstacles encountered and progress made by women living in extreme poverty as regards the enjoyment of their fundamental rights. The reports of the expert were to be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women.

60. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights (resolution 1998/33), the Commission appointed a Special Rapporteur whose mandate would focus on the right to education, taking into account gender considerations, in particular the situation and needs of the girl child, and promoting the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education. The reports were to be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women whenever they concerned the situation of women in the field of the right to education.

61. The Commission affirmed that a gender perspective needed to be applied in the implementation of the right to development, *inter alia*, by ensuring that women played an active role in the development process; and it emphasized that the empowerment of women and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society was fundamental to development (resolution 1998/72).

62. In a comprehensive resolution on the rights of the child, the Commission underlined the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes relating to children, and it also dealt specifically with the situation of the girl child (resolution 1998/76).

4. Country-specific resolutions

63. The Commission requested several country rapporteurs, including those on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, to apply a gender perspective systematically in the reporting process, including information collection and recommendations. As in the past, a number of country-specific resolutions referred to gender as a factor in the enjoyment of human rights:

(a) Haiti (resolution 1998/58): the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women was once again invited to consider favourably the Government's invitation to visit the county;

(b) Somalia (resolution 1998/59): deep concern was expressed at violence against women and children;

(c) Cambodia (resolution 1998/60): grave concern was expressed about numerous instances of violations of human rights, including rape. The Government as a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was urged to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women, including in the political and public life of the country, and to combat violence against women in all its forms;

(d) Myanmar (resolution 1998/63): the Commission welcomed the accession of Myanmar to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It expressed deep concern at the violations of the rights of women, especially women who were refugees, internally displaced women and women belonging to ethnic minorities or the political opposition, in particular forced labour and sexual violence and exploitation, including rape;

(e) Sudan (resolution 1998/57): the Commission expressed deep concern at violations of the rights of women and children, and urged the Government to bring those violations to an end, especially in the light of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and to take urgent measures to ensure the repeal of all legislative and other measures that discriminated against women;

(f) Rwanda (resolution 1998/69): the Commission commended the Government for the cooperation and assistance extended to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. It urged the Government to give the utmost priority to the prosecution and punishment of crimes of sexual violence committed against women, in line with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. It also welcomed the draft law on matrimonial property and succession which was under consideration, and encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to improve the welfare, status and role of women, especially genocide survivors and returnees, in Rwandan society, with particular attention to matters concerning property;

(g) Afghanistan (resolution 1998/70): the Commission took into account the report of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on her visit to Afghanistan in November 1997. The Commission noted with deep concern the violations of the human rights of women and girls and urged all Afghan parties to provide women with equal access to political participation, employment, education and health care, to ensure women's freedom of movement and prosecute those responsible for physical attacks on women. Furthermore, the Commission urged the United Nations to apply a gender perspective in all programmes carried out in Afghanistan, to ensure the

participation of women in those programmes, and that women benefited equally with men from such programmes; and to implement the recommendations of the Inter-agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;

(h) Equatorial Guinea (resolution 1998/71): the Government was encouraged to pursue the efforts it had already undertaken to effectively integrate women into the process of the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country;

(i) Islamic Republic of Iran (resolution 1998/80): the Commission noted with interest the positive statements made by the Government about the need to review laws and attitudes that discriminated against women, and also noted with interest the appointment of the first female Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and of four female judges. It expressed concern at the continued lack of full and equal enjoyment by women of human rights; and called upon the Government to build on the progress made in the past year by taking further measures to eliminate discrimination and human rights violations against women, including all discrimination in law and in practice against them, for example by amending article 1117 of the Civil Code, which subjected women who wished to take up a profession to their husband's prior consent.

E. Commission on Sustainable Development

64. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session (20 April-1 May 1998) focused on the issue of freshwater management as its sectoral theme. The Commission recognized the importance of broadening women's participation in water resource development, management and protection. It also stressed the importance of the integration of gender analysis in water planning. In its decisions, the Commission urged Governments to ensure that women, youth, indigenous people and local communities had equal access to education and training programmes in water resource development, management and protection.

65. The Commission also reviewed the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. During the discussion, high priority was accorded, *inter alia*, to the empowerment of women.

66. Responding to its expected role as a forum to promote action-oriented dialogue and partnership between Governments and the representatives of the main economic sectors, the Commission on Sustainable Development introduced an "industry segment" which provided an interactive discussion on the matter between the industry representatives, non-governmental organizations, Governments and international organizations. Four themes were discussed during the segment: responsible entrepreneurship; corporate management tools; technology cooperation; and industry and freshwater. The participants recognized that involvement of all stakeholders, including women, was crucial for problem-solving in that area.

67. The session's high-level meeting included the participation of ministers and policy makers. The participants considered the outcomes of the discussion during the sixth session and provided a set of recommendations regarding the Commission's inter-sessional work. They furthermore emphasized that effective implementation of Agenda 21 required strong partnership with major groups, which should be enhanced in future work.

68. To focus on women's views and perspectives, the Division for Sustainable Development and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) organized a series of events for the occasion of the "Day of women". The "Day of ..." format had been a part of the Commission's sessions since the Day of Local Authorities was organized in 1995. The events of the "Day of women" included a debate on women and industry, a panel on women's role in local agenda 21s, and a gender mainstreaming seminar focusing on the effect of industrial activities on ecosystems and women, based on the concept of industrial hot spots. Among the other events that took place was one involving gender aspects of sustainable water development.

F. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

69. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its seventh session (21-30 April 1998). She underlined the importance of reflecting a gender perspective in all areas of work of the Commission, and addressed issues of particular relevance to women in the areas of crime prevention and criminal justice. She encouraged the strengthening of cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the International Centre for Crime Prevention, and offered the Division's cooperation in the conceptualization, preparation and conduct of the technical workshop on

women in the criminal justice system at the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

70. In a resolution on strategic management, the Commission decided that it would mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities, and requested the secretariat to integrate a gender perspective into all activities of the International Centre for Crime Prevention. In taking this action, the Commission referred to agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming.

71. In a resolution on United Nations standards and norms, the need for gender mainstreaming was highlighted in conjunction with children in the criminal justice system. Measures for special groups, including female and child victims of violence and sexual abuse, were called for. The work programme for the Tenth Congress would be endorsed, including the convening of the workshop on women in the criminal justice system.

72. In the framework of the Commission's ongoing work on combating transnational organized crime, an ad hoc committee on the elaboration of a comprehensive international convention against organized transnational crime is to be established by the General Assembly. The committee is to focus, *inter alia*, on the elaboration of international instruments addressing trafficking in women and children. That point was reiterated in a resolution on trafficking in women and children, which also raised a number of other issues, including measures to be taken by States individually or in cooperation with others to prevent and combat such trafficking. The particular vulnerability of women and children to becoming victims of the crime of illegal trafficking in and transporting of migrants, was also noted.

G. Commission on Science and Technology for Development

73. During the 1995-1997 inter-sessional period, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development concentrated its efforts on the substantive theme of information and communication technologies and development, dealing especially with the issues of access and impact. This work resulted both in a report and recommendations, which were approved at the third session of the Commission in May 1997, and in a larger source book addressed to international organizations, Governments, non-government organizations, private enterprises and researchers.

74. The Gender Advisory Board, which was established by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as an expert body on gender implications of science and technology for development, continued its four-year mandate lasting from May 1995 to May 1999.

75. Members of the Gender Advisory Board contributed to the discussions in the Information and Communication Technologies and Development working groups of the Commission, and to the preparation and review of draft reports. These efforts were reviewed at the inaugural meeting of the Board, held at Geneva in May 1997. Since then, the Board has concentrated its work on the establishment of a Regional Secretariat for Gender, Science and Technology in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, to be located in Jakarta, Indonesia and a proposed Regional Network for Gender, Science and Technology for Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, to be established in Montevideo, Uruguay.

76. The Gender Advisory Board intends to hold its second meeting in Kampala, Uganda, in July 1998. At that time the Board will address opportunities for collaboration with the Commission and member Governments during the inter-sessional period. During the current inter-sessional period, the focus of the Commission's work will be the theme "Science and technology partnerships and networking for national capacity-building". At the July meeting, the Board will also consider opportunities for the establishment of a Regional Board Secretariat for Africa.

77. In addition, the members of the Board will review the results of collaboration with the Commission during the 1995-1997 inter-sessional period and the past year, to assess the effectiveness of the activities of the Gender Advisory Board and possible new directions for the future.

IV. Activities of the regional commissions

78. Since the activities of the regional commissions are discussed in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation which is before the Economic and Social Council at its present session, the section below describes follow-up activities to the Fourth World Conference on Women that have been undertaken by the secretariats of the commissions in their respective regions.

A. Economic Commission for Africa

79. The capacity of the African Centre for Women of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which is the institutional gender focal point of the Commission, has been strengthened. The Centre's leadership has been upgraded to the level of Director (D-1), similar to other substantive divisions and its Professional staff was increased.

80. In the context of the role of ECA in providing technical assistance to member States for the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, the African Centre for Women is in the process of holding five subregional meetings.

81. In order to promote gender mainstreaming within the Commission, gender issues have been officially defined as cross-cutting. Every substantive division is now required to integrate gender concerns in its work programme. To ensure this, ECA has appointed gender focal points in each division and in each of the five Subregional Development Centres of ECA. Furthermore, all the ECA Professional staff are undergoing a systematic training programme on gender mainstreaming.

82. On the occasion of its fortieth anniversary, ECA organized a conference entitled "Women and economic development: investing in our future". The conference was a collaborative effort between ECA and several United Nations organizations and bodies, namely the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank. The conference drew the attention of decision makers from government, the private sector and civil society at the highest level to women's access to resources, information technology and human rights. It featured a Forum of Heads of State, in which government leaders from six African countries reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Platform for Action. The conference also gave fresh impetus to the involvement of non-governmental organizations.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

83. One of the main focuses of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was mainstreaming gender. The Commission set up a working group on this issue with the goal of preparing an action plan on mainstreaming gender. Furthermore, ESCWA participated in various inter-agency efforts and working groups geared towards mainstreaming gender in the system.

84. Another important part of the work of ESCWA was research and dissemination of information on the status of women in the Arab region. Using the *World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, as a model ESCWA published a study entitled *Arab Women: Trends and Statistics*. Furthermore, ESCWA established a database on policies affecting women and the family, prepared a chapter entitled "Women and development in the ESCWA region", which was incorporated in the Commission's annual *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region, 1996-1997*. Also, the Commission produced a wall chart with data illustrating the situation of women and men in the region and a study on women in the food and textile industries.

C. Economic Commission for Europe

85. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has taken various measures to mainstream gender in its own structure, policies and practices. In April 1997, it adopted a plan providing directions for its programme and methods of work. One of these directions was to make gender mainstreaming a cross-cutting concern in all activities. Subsequently, ECE established gender focal points in all its divisions.

86. In April 1998, ECE, jointly with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, held a meeting on gender statistics. The participating countries and organizations discussed national and regional developments in gender statistics as they related to the following substantive topics: economic well-being in terms of earnings, income and career mobility over the course of a lifetime; statistical measurement of violence and crime; progress made in implementing recommendations outlined in paragraph 206 and 207 of the Beijing Platform for Action; progress in the measurement of unpaid work and time-use; studies on improved statistics on ageing for policy needs; and caring activities.

87. An exchange of the most recent findings and best practices took place on all these issues and conclusions for further coordination and action were drawn therefrom. The meeting also agreed that an updated version of "Women and Men in Europe and North America, 1995" should be prepared for the year 2000. This would constitute one of the regional inputs to the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which is to be held in 2000.

D. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

88. In November 1997, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Conference adopted the Consensus of Santiago, which outlines measures to promote gender equality over the next three years. It proposed activities to mainstream gender in the areas of research and data collection, environment, political participation, education and the labour market. Furthermore, the Conference agreed on measures to combat violence against women, to strengthen national mechanisms for the advancement of women and to encourage equal sharing of roles within the family. The regional conference, which meets every three years, aims at implementing the regional Platform of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001, and the Beijing Platform for Action. The activities of the Board of Presiding Officers have been reinforced and the liaison function with national machineries for the advancement of women in the region has been strengthened.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

89. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) carried out various projects to promote women's economic development. ESCAP continued implementing a project to empower women in poverty and is planning a regional meeting to establish a plan of action to alleviate the feminization of poverty. In order to promote women in small businesses, the Commission implemented a project to empower women in small businesses in Indochina and organized a training course for Women in entrepreneurship and enterprise development in cooperation with the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, ESCAP is carrying out a project to analyse the impact of globalization on women and to formulate policy recommendations.

90. Other projects were geared towards the promotion of women's human rights. As part of a project to combat violence against women, a subregional meeting of South Asian countries was held in December 1997 in Bangladesh. Furthermore, ESCAP has launched a project to promote the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through networks of non-governmental organizations. In order to disseminate the Beijing Platform for Action, ESCAP conducted a project which addressed grass-roots women on South Asia and gender-focused non-governmental organizations, and facilitated the production of documents and an information kit on the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Platform for Action.

91. To further strengthen the regional network in the area of gender, ESCAP conducted a three-day training workshop on new information technology. The workshop outcome will be linked to the global information network, WomenWatch.

V. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

92. The third session of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality took place from 25 to 27 February 1998 at United Nations Headquarters. Based on inter-sessional preparatory work that had been undertaken by several ad hoc working groups, further progress was made in improving coordination and strengthen cooperation in support of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of gender mainstreaming.

93. The Committee finalized for adoption by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) a statement entitled "Gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system: a commitment to action". The statement, which was adopted by ACC at its first regular session of 1998, is being widely disseminated for action by all United Nations entities. The Committee also welcomed action already taken by senior United Nations managers in response to the Secretary-General's letter transmitting for action agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming,[15] and urged ACC members to take further action consistent with the agreed conclusions. It urged ACC to integrate fully the results of the Inter-agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan (12-24 November 1997) into the strategic framework on Afghanistan.

94. The Committee continued to prepare tools and methodologies to facilitate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. To this end, a framework for collecting good practices was adopted. A portfolio of such practices for use primarily by resident representatives/coordinators, United Nations system managers and staff and by external audiences such as

Governments, is now being compiled. Efforts to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure progress in gender mainstreaming, and to influence financial monitoring, classification systems and budget codes to ensure effective tracking of women-in-development and gender activities will continue inter-sessionally. The Committee will convene a workshop to clarify the implications, both at the policy level and operationally, of the rights-based approach to the advancement and empowerment of women and gender equality. This workshop, which was also endorsed by the Commission on the Status of Women, is intended to be the Committee's contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, the workshop is expected to provide practical input into the work of the United Nations system to reflect a common vision of United Nations country teams on a rights-based approach to development. Furthermore, with a growing emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, and given the importance attached to the role and function of gender focal points in agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee is now conducting a review of the women-in-development/gender focal point function in the United Nations system. A database/inventory of all gender training materials and instruments in use in the United Nations system is being compiled. The Committee endorsed WomenWatch as an inter-agency project, and several additional United Nations entities are expected to join this common United Nations gateway for information on women. Task managers were identified to lead the inter-sessional work on all these activities. Further action is expected to be taken by the Committee at its fourth session.

95. The Committee's input to the Turin workshop on integrated conference follow-up at the field level was subsequently reflected in the ACC statement on field-level follow-up to global conferences: guidance note for the resident coordinator system.

96. Coordination among the United Nations entities in preparing the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* continued. Under the overall responsibility and guidance of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, and on the basis of an agreed annotated outline, lead entities for the preparation of various chapters were identified, and a timetable for completion of drafts was agreed upon.

97. The fourth session of the Committee will take place from 23 to 26 February 1999 at United Nations Headquarters. One day will be devoted to a dialogue between the Committee and a small number of resident coordinators and agency field staff to strengthen the knowledge base with regard to field-level implementation of gender-specific conference recommendations.

98. The Committee's Chairperson participated as a panellist in the session of the Economic and Social Council on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, together with the convenors of the ACC task forces on conference follow-up and the Chairpersons of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. III.

[3] Ibid., draft resolution IV, sect. IV.

[4] Ibid., draft resolution IV, sect. I.

[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/47/38), chap. I.

[6] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. II.

[7] Ibid. chap. I, sect. A.

[8] Ibid., chap. I, sect. B.

[9] Ibid., chap. I, sect. D.

[10] A/52/3, chap. IV, para. 4.

[11] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 6* (E/1998/26), chap. I, sect. B, resolution 36/1.

[12] Ibid., chap. I, sect. B.

[13] Ibid., *Supplement No. 5* (E/1998/25), chap. I, sect. C, decision 1998/1.

[14] Ibid., *Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. D.

[15] In this connection, see also the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1997 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system, which is before the Council at its present session.